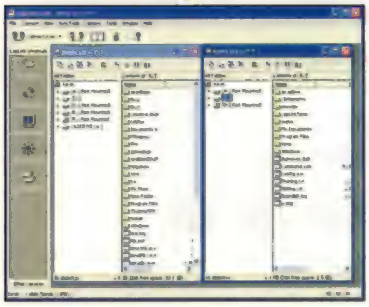
by Kevin Savetz

LapLink Gold 11



LapLink Gold 11
$179.95; $139.95 download
LapLink
www.laplink.com

LapLink Gold 11 is an excellent option for remote PC control and file transfers. Not only does the program let you connect two PCs via TCP/IP and modems, but it also supports connections via serial, parallel, and USB ports.

Wireless infrared and IPX networks round out LapLink's connectivity choices, many of which are useful only if your PCs are in the same room. If they are, however, LapLink provides tremendous flexibility in connecting them.

LapLink also includes numerous features that are well thought out. The app works even if one PC is behind a firewall, and Print Redirection lets you print a remote document on a local printer or print a local document on a remote printer. LapLink also includes a file transfer tool, an automatic file synchronization function, and chat via keyboard or voice. The package also bundles a light version of PowerQuest Drive Image for cloning hard drives.

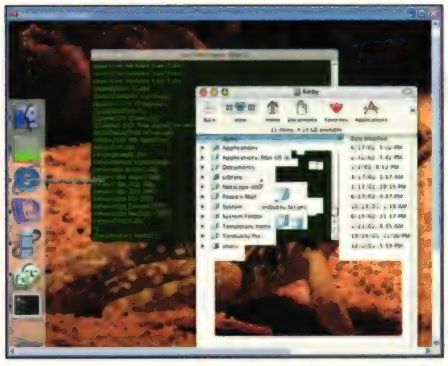
LapLink's only major downside is that unlike Timbuktu, GoToMyPC, and Virtual Network Computing, it's for Windows only (95 and later). You can use the SurfUp tool to make your PC's files remotely accessible from any computer with a Web browser, but you can only remotely control the PC from another PC running Windows.

If the PC you want to install on doesn't have a CD-ROM drive, LapLink can create a floppy-based installer or copy itself to the remote computer via serial cable. (The latter method didn't work on our Win95 system, however, citing a missing DLL.)

A downloadable version of LapLink costs $139.95. The $179.95 boxed version of the app includes serial and parallel cables for connecting PCs. A USB networking cable costs $20. Upgrading or sidegrading from a competing product is $109.95.

LapLink Gold 11 beats Timbuktu Pro hands down for connectivity options and extra features. If you only need to access your PC using Windows, LapLink could be worth its weight in gold. ▲

Netopia Timbuktu Pro 5.0



Timbuktu Pro 5.0
$169.95; Twin Pack
$209.95; Multiplatform Pack
Netopia
www.netopia.com

Timbuktu Pro 5.0 also lets you access a remote PC via a dial-up modem or any TCP/IP connection, including a LAN or the Internet. The app also supports file exchange. For example, you can copy files from the remote PC's hard drive to your local PC. A two-pane window that shows the local and remote computers lets you simply drag files or directories from one pane to the other to copy them. You can also chat, instant message style, or use an intercom function to speak via a mic.

Timbuktu is available for both Windows (98 and higher) and Mac OS (8 through X). With the Multiplatform Pack ($179.95 download), you can control a Mac from a Windows machine, or vice versa. A Twin Pack ($139.95 download) lets you control one Windows PC from another. The program's Windows and Mac OS X interfaces are just different enough, however, to be disturbing when switching between the two.

Control of a remote host over a LAN connection is fast and responsive. Graphical glitches (whenever windows appeared or were moved) were a constant annoyance that made the remote server very difficult to use.

Version 5 isn't a major upgrade; the most notable new features include support for XP, the ability to access systems with multiple monitors, and some security enhancements. Numerous other additions are mostly esoteric ones ("Now supports authenticating and installing group policies in a Active Directory Domain environment. Now supports being installed and operated in a terminal server environment.") that won't excite many users.

Graphical glitches aside, the program works well enough, but I can't recommend it above its myriad competitors—including GoToMyPC, Virtual Network Computing, pcAnywhere, and LapLink—unless your coworkers already use Timbuktu or there's a similarly compelling reason. ▲

CPU Ranking: 0 = Absolutely Worthless 2.5 = Absolutely Average 5 = Absolutely Perfect